

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Thorndale

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 213 West Thorndale Drive

N/A not for publication

city, town Oxford

N/A vicinity

state North Carolina code NC

county Granville

code 077

zip code 27565

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property

private

public-local

public-State

public-Federal

Category of Property

building(s)

district

site

structure

object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

2 buildings

1

\_\_\_\_\_ sites

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ structures

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ objects

2

2 Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

Historic and Architectural Resources of Granville

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

County, North Carolina

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

William S. Fair, Jr.  
Signature of certifying official  
State Historic Preservation Officer

1-29-88  
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic-single dwelling

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Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic-single dwelling

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Federal

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Other: transitional Georgian/Federal

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

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walls weatherboard

---

roof metal

---

other wood

---

brick

---

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Describe present and historic physical appearance.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1 DESCRIPTION

One of Oxford's oldest surviving plantation era residences, this substantial, two-story frame dwelling was likely built by Horace L. Robards as the centerpiece of his 206 acre plantation. Set down a long oak and cedar lined lane, with wooden-fenced horse pastures stretching to its western side and its rear, the house retains much of its original exterior, and virtually all of its original interior, finish. Originally the dwelling had four rooms downstairs and two rooms above, divided by a center hallway. Whether the two back downstairs rooms were covered by a shed roof, a likely configuration, is not known, for they were topped by two additional rooms late in the nineteenth or early in the twentieth century. Wings were also extended to either side of the rear rooms of the original block around that time. A final turn of the century addition - an elaborate, two-tier Victorian porch adorned with sweeping brackets, spindles, and turned posts and balusters - was removed in the early twentieth century.

The original three-bay wide front block features a number of motifs common to the first half of the nineteenth century in the county. Beaded weatherboards sheath its heavy timber frame and its raised basement is built of brick laid in Flemish bond. Its exterior end chimneys, replacements for the originals, are laid in stretcher bond. A large, original, raised six-panel door leads into the brick-walled basement at the east gable end. The windows of the original block are nine-over-nine downstairs and six-over-six above. They are enframed in delicate three-part surrounds - a form commonly found at Georgian and Federal style dwellings in the county - which are additionally adorned with the flat-angled molding that would become popular locally with the coming of the Greek Revival. Changes to the front block, in addition to the house's extensions, include the addition of a one-bay wide porch in place of its Victorian porch early in the twentieth century - a front facade gable, the mark of which remains in the metal roof, was also removed at this time - and the extension of the once flush gable end eaves that still retain their box cornices and patternboards.

Inside, the house has been little changed and retains a surprisingly uniform finish. All of its original rooms - the four downstairs, the two above and the hallways - are finished in the same ornate fashion, a rarity in a county where upstairs rooms were commonly less elaborately finished than their more public downstairs mates. All of the rooms have the same

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

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transitional Georgian/Federal and Federal style finish, including six-panel doors - flat on one side and slightly raised on the other - with their original Carpenter locks in place; delicate three-part surrounds; Federal mantels with fluted posts; and flat-paneled, molded wainscoting. The west rear downstairs room retains a built in cupboard with three-part molding that is said to have once been connected by a dumbwaiter to the kitchen below. The hall features a graceful stair with narrow tapered newels and an elegantly modeled handrail. Physical evidence at the second floor suggest that it may have originally split into two runs at the landing; it now makes but a single, winding climb.

To the rear of the house ["A" on the attached sketch map] stand two non-contributing frame structures, a small, early twentieth century servants' house [B] and a mid-twentieth century, frame horse stable [C]; all the original outbuildings are gone. These two buildings do not detract from, but rather enhance, the pastoral contributing site and setting of the former plantation.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Agriculture

Period of Significance

circa 1837-1865

Significant Dates

circa 1837

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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Thorndale is one of Oxford's few surviving plantation era properties that predates the Greek Revival period. Once the center of a large plantation located to the west of the town, it retains a gracious setting - surrounded by horse pastures and approached down a cedar and oak lined lane - in spite of its later inclusion within city limits and the development of much of its original property. It is significant historically as a well-maintained, intact example of an early plantation era dwelling of a substantial planter (see associated Historic Context 1 - The Plantation Era in Granville County, 1746-1865), and architecturally as a fine example of the transitional Georgian/Federal and Federal styles in the county (see associated Property Type 1 - Georgian and Federal Style Dwellings). Turn of the century additions were made above its rear two rooms and to the sides of those rooms, but it still retains three-part surrounds, box cornices, patternboards and a locally rare Flemish bond foundation. Inside, it was surprisingly finished as finely upstairs as down. All four original downstairs rooms and the original two above retain their matching three-part surrounds, six-panel doors, Carpenter locks, flush-sheathed wainscoting and Federal style mantels; in addition, the hallway has an elegantly fashioned stair. Thorndale's period of significance does not extend beyond 1865, the end of the plantation era, because there are no buildings or structures remaining on its grounds that relate to its use in the post-Civil War years as a bright leaf tobacco farm.

Horace L. Robards was deeded 206 acres of land by his father in 1837 [Deed Book 8, Page 202]. A chimney brick found by the current owners, bearing the same date, suggests that Robards built the original block of the house in 1837, making the dwelling one of the last surviving examples of the transitional Georgian/Federal and Federal style dwellings built in the county before the coming of the Greek Revival style in force in the 1840s. A wealthy planter, Robards owned approximately 30 slaves in 1840.

In 1863, Sarah T. Thornton bought 100 acres of the property, including the dwelling, for \$2,600.00 [Deed Book 21, Page 612]. At her death in 1887 she left the house to her brother, Robert William Lassiter (1815-1891) [Will Book 24, Page 14] and it remained in the Lassiter family for three generations. Lassiter's wife, the former Catherine Blount (1826-1903), transferred it to their son and daughter-in-law, Robert Walter

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

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(1855-1928) and Sarah (Kittrell) Lassiter (1860-1909), who in turn passed it on to their son, Robert Gilliam Lassiter. In 1949 1st Citizens Bank acquired the property from Robert Gilliam [Deed Book 126, Page 451]. Three years later the house and much of the still extensive acreage of the former plantation were purchased by John King Nelms [Deed Book 136, Page 295]. He sold the house and a small part of its property in 1954 to F. R. Barlowe [Deed Book 136, Page 295] and, with others, began the development of the Thorndale Subdivision, a substantial development at the town's west end. The house, largely insulated from the development by its lot and pastures, was purchased with approximately 17 acres of land from Barlowe in 1965 by its present owners, state Representative William T. Watkins and his wife, Louise, who returned it to its past glory.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Hays, Francis B. Unpublished collection of 135 scrapbooks on Granville County history located at Richard H. Thornton Library, Oxford, N.C.

Granville County Deeds. Granville County Courthouse, Oxford, N.C.

Granville County Wills. Granville County Courthouse, Oxford, N.C.

United States Manuscript Censuses. Microfilm located at Richard H. Thornton Public Library, Oxford, N.C.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property approximately 13 acres

UTM References

A              
 Zone Easting Northing

C

B              
 Zone Easting Northing

D

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Marvin A. Brown/Architectural Historian & Patricia Esperon/Historian  
 organization Granville County-Oxford Historic Survey date 8/18/87  
 street & number P.O. Box 1556(State Historic Pres. Office) telephone 919-693-1491  
 city or town Oxford state N.C. zip code 27565

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

UTM REFERENCES

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	17	714880	4019910
B	17	715030	4019920
C	17	715000	4020200
D	17	714910	4020190
E	17	714800	4020070
F	17	714800	4020000

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at point A: 17 714880 4019910 on the USGS polygon where the fence line, drawn on the USGS map, meets the tree line, continuing due west in a straight line approximately 400 feet, along the edge of the woods, to point B: 17 715030 4019920 on the polygon, where the edge of the woods meets the western edge of Dale Drive. Continuing due north, along the western edge of Dale Drive, approximately 825 feet to the southwestern corner of the intersection of Dale Drive and Thorndale Drive at point C: 17 715000 4020200 on the polygon. Continuing from point C on the polygon along the southern edge of Thorndale Drive approximately 325 feet to point D: 17 714910 4020190 on the polygon, where the fence line meets the southern edge of Thorndale Drive. Continuing southeast in a straight line from point D on the polygon approximately 460 feet to point E: 17 714800 4020070 on the polygon where the fence line turns due south. Continuing due south in a straight line approximately 325 feet along the fence line to point F: 17 714800 4020000 on the polygon. Continuing in a straight line southwest, along the fence line marked on the USGS map, approximately 325 feet to the point of origin.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

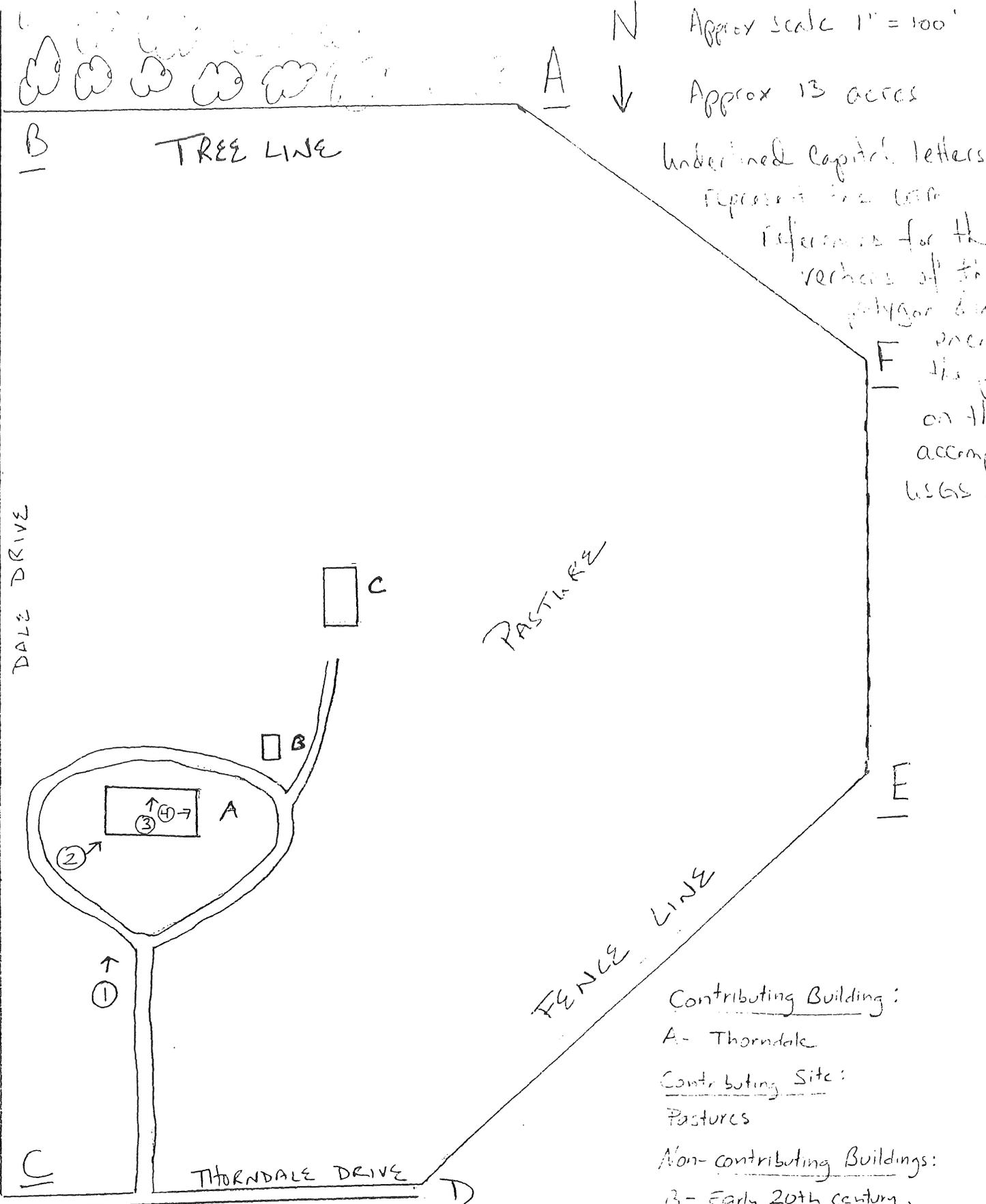
## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 2

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The thirteen acres nominated include the dwelling house and surrounding pasture land that have been a historic part of the property, maintain historic integrity, and convey the property's historic setting. A non-contributing servant's house and a non-contributing horse stable that stand immediately behind the house are also included in the nomination. Although the nominated area largely conforms with the owner's property boundaries some acreage was not nominated because of the presence of intruding structures or because it is now overgrown woodland. In these cases the land use has substantially changed so that it no longer contributes to the historic integrity or historic significance of the property as a plantation era farm.

The southern boundary of the nominated property from UTM point A to UTM point B includes pasture land to its north and excludes woodland to its south. The eastern boundary from UTM point B to the southwest corner of the intersection of Dale Drive and Thorndale Drive includes the dwelling and pasture land to its west and excludes property that does not belong to the owner to its east. The northern boundary from UTM points C to D and D to E includes the dwelling and pasture land to its south and excludes property that does not belong to the owner to the north. The western boundary from UTM points E to F include pasture land to its east and excludes housing development to its west. The southwest boundary from UTM point F to A includes pasture land to its northeast and excludes property that does not belong to the owner to its southwest.



N  
 ↓  
 Approx scale 1" = 100'  
 Approx 13 acres

Underlined capital letters  
 represent the vertices  
 of the polygon shown  
 in the accompanying  
 USGS map.

**THORNDALE**  
 Granville County, NC

- Contributing Building:  
 A - Thorndale
- Contributing Site:  
 Pastures
- Non-contributing Buildings:  
 B - Early 20th century,  
 frame servant's house  
 C - Mid 20th century,  
 frame horse stable

